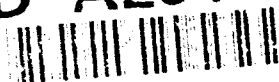


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**MARINE CORPS RECRUIT  
DEPOT CONSOLIDATION --  
CAN WE AFFORD THE SAVINGS?**

BY

**LIEUTENANT COLONEL RICHARD D. HAMILTON**  
United States Marine Corps

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**USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER**

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**MARINE CORPS RECRUIT DEPOT CONSOLIDATION --  
CAN WE AFFORD THE SAVINGS?**

**AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT**

**by**

**Lieutenant Colonel Richard D. Hamilton  
United States Marine Corps**

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Project Adviser**

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**U.S. Army War College  
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013**

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## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Figure 1. FY93 YEARS OF SERVICE RECAP.....p. 9
- Figure 2. ECONOMIC IMPACT/COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE IMPACT DATA  
CALL (San Diego, Ca.).....p. 16
- Figure 3. ECONOMIC IMPACT/COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE IMPACT DATA  
CALL (Beaufort, S.C.).....p. 20

## **MARINE CORPS RECRUIT DEPOT CONSOLIDATION --**

### **CAN WE AFFORD THE SAVINGS?**

The collapse of communism and the subsequent dismemberment of the Soviet Union has placed the United States Armed Forces in a serious dilemma. The "Great Satan" that President Reagan once so effectively vilified has unceremoniously evaporated! The threat that fueled our military complex for over 40 years has vanished, and with it apparently our nation's will to maintain the most powerful military force on earth. Victory in the cold war has now brought immediate demands for "peace dividends" and billions are currently being slashed from Defense budgets. Many "sacred cows" have been reluctantly led to slaughter, to include: an 18 Division U. S. Army; a 600 ship U. S. Navy; and the Strategic Air Command of the U. S. Air Force.

Regrettably, the U. S. Marine Corps has not been spared from this fiscal "butcher shop". Severe force structure reductions have been mandated and when fully implemented, their impact will dramatically reshape our Corps. Clearly, all future resource allocation decisions must now be reviewed in the shadow of these new fiscal realities. To this end, one of the Marine Corps' most ominous challenges in response to fiscal constraints is the decision to close, and/or consolidate, existing bases and stations. In this paper I will address one critical element of

this complex issue, the viability of closing/consolidating our current Marine Corps Recruit Depots' (MCRD). First, I will examine existing capabilities in light of known requirements. Next, under the specter of ongoing Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) studies, I will analyze the advisability of consolidating our current Depots. Finally, I will review the results of this study and provide a recommendation on how best to support Marine Corps recruit training requirements of the 21st century.

#### **TWO COASTS WITH COMPLIMENTARY CAPABILITIES**

The Marine Corps currently has two Depots for training recruits, MCRD San Diego, California and MCRD Parris Island, South Carolina. These historic facilities have been the cornerstones of Marine enlisted basic training for eighty years and have effectively "welcomed" millions of young Americans into the Corps during times of war and peace. Each Depot supports the training requirements of its respective Recruiting Region, with San Diego recruiting and processing all recruits enlisted west of the Mississippi, while Parris Island supports the eastern half of the nation. To date, these Depots have been responsive to the needs of the Corps, jointly providing an effective transition from civilian to Marine by producing "basic Marines who function effectively in garrison, are trained in rudimentary individual field and combat skills, and practice those personal and professional traits which distinguish them as Marines."<sup>1</sup>



The Depots jointly access, train, and graduate almost 40,000 recruits annually, with MCRD San Diego responsible for approximately 54% of the male graduates<sup>2</sup> while Parris Island provides the remaining recruits, to include all (approx. 1,700) female graduates. Both Depots employ a Systems Approach to Training process which is developed by Headquarters Marine Corps in the form of an official Program of Instruction. Accordingly, all recruits regardless of their Depot receive a standardized indoctrination into the Corps and must achieve mastery of specific criteria before graduation.

#### **SUNNY SAN DIEGO**

"In the summer of 1923 the Marine Corps recruit depot for the western half of the United States moved from the Marine Barracks, Mare Island Navy Yard, California, to the new post at San Diego."<sup>3</sup> Initially established on 732 acres of tideland known as Dutch Flat, today MCRD San Diego is situated in the very heart of our nation's sixth largest city. It currently consists of 432 acres (of which only 388 are considered usable), and is completely circumscribed by a Naval Training Center, industrial plants and the San Diego International Airport.<sup>4</sup> There is currently no room for significant expansion. The Depot's primary mission of training enlisted recruits encompasses a 12 week syllabus, with recruits spending the first 4 weeks and the last 4 weeks of their training at the Depot. The middle 4 weeks are

spent 42 miles north of San Diego at Camp Pendleton, California where the recruits undergo 2 weeks of marksmanship training and 2 weeks of weapons and field combat training. The Depot's limited size and proximity to the metropolitan area does not provide sufficient space to conduct the 4 week weapons qualification/combat training at San Diego.

MCRD San Diego is also home for Headquarters, Western Recruiting Region; a Drill Instructor School; and the Marine Corps' only Recruiters School. It provides medical and dental clinics, an exchange, and other facilities necessary to support an average population of 7,300 active duty Marines (recruits and permanent personnel) and 889 full and part-time civilian employees.<sup>5</sup>

Although almost seven decades old, MCRD San Diego is our Corps' most modern training facility. This capability is the result of a robust Military Construction (MILCON) program that has significantly upgraded Depot facilities, to include: a fully computerized armory completed in 1986 @ \$2.7 million; a Recruit Processing Facility completed in 1987 @ \$13.3 million; a Recruit Training Facility (classrooms, test facilities, etc.) completed in 1988 @ \$9.9 million; and numerous other construction initiatives totaling over \$90 million in the last 10 years.<sup>6</sup>

MCRD San Diego represents an investment of over \$1.4 billion, encompassing 2,239,105 square feet of indoor facilities and 100+ acres of outdoor training areas.<sup>7</sup> These modern facilities provide the Marine Corps with an impressive training capability and great flexibility. Current optimum monthly throughput is 1,800 recruits, with a minimum and maximum monthly peacetime capability of 1,040 and 2,956 respectively.<sup>3</sup> These are self-imposed constraints, established to effectively utilize training facilities and the permanent personnel assigned. The Depot is projected to train 21,358 recruits in FY93<sup>9</sup>, reflecting a monthly throughput average of 1,798, practically its optimum capability. A review of MCRD San Diego's surge and mobilization capabilities will be addressed separately.

#### "P.I."

MCRD Parris Island is not unlike San Diego. It too is surrounded, but Parris Island's barriers are natural, not man made. The Depot was relocated from Norfolk, Virginia to Parris Island in 1915 and today consists of approximately 8,095 acres, of which 3,274 are dry land and 4,773 acres are salt marsh, creeks, and ponds.<sup>10</sup> As with San Diego, MCRD Parris Island's primary mission is to train enlisted recruits, annually achieving a throughput of approximately 17,000 male and 1,700 female Marines. Minimum and maximum monthly peacetime throughput capacities approximate those of San Diego. The training syllabus

consists of the same Headquarters Marine Corps approved 12 week training cycle; but unlike MCRD San Diego, Parris Island possesses the capability to conduct all recruit training (including weapons firing) within the Depot confines. This flexibility obviously enhances training and significantly reduces costs. Mirroring San Diego, MCRD Parris Island is Headquarters to the Marine Corps' Eastern Recruiting Region and also contains the east coast's Drill Instructor School. The Depot's permanent personnel total over 2,043 active duty Marines and approximately 471 civilian employees.<sup>11</sup> Parris Island's facilities, capabilities, and potential for expansion (surge/mobilization) will be more closely reviewed when the issue of Depot consolidation is examined.

As noted above, the Marine Corps' current recruit training Depots have provided an invaluable service to our nation for over eight decades. The history and location of each base are unique. Jointly they accomplish the most difficult, yet essential mission of our Corps, the "creation" of a United States Marine. Having reviewed the Corps' current capability to train (read produce) these Marines, it is now equally important to understand the future accession requirements for these "leathernecks" against the backdrop of diminishing end-strength.

## REQUIREMENTS AND RISKS

Accurately assessing the future recruit training requirements of the Marine Corps is a complex task demanding the diverse talents of both a "beancounter" and a "fortuneteller". First, let's review the "beans".

The Marine Corps has been directed to reduce its total end-strength to 159,100 by FY97. This unpleasant fact translates into a significant decrease in enlisted structure from our current 165,397 (FY92) to only 142,865 by FY97, a decrease of over 22,500 enlisted Marines.<sup>12</sup> Theoretically, this drawdown of total structure should correspond to a proportional reduction in enlisted accessions over the next five years. However, upon closer examination, this is not the case. My review demonstrates that the decline of projected accessions is not commensurate with the annual drawdown of end-strength. For example, when the Corps' mandated end-strength of 159,100 is achieved in 1997, accessions of 29,843 recruits (28,243 male/1,600 female)<sup>13</sup> for FY97 are still being projected. This projection, when compared to our FY92 accessions of 31,634 (30,162 males/1,472 females), is indeed striking because of their relative similar size (a delta of only 1,789 accessions).<sup>14</sup> When carefully analyzed, these facts are not simply an anomaly, but rather the result of two separate, yet linked Marine Corps manpower decisions: (1) fewer senior SNCOs and (2) a younger enlisted force.

First, let's examine the senior enlisted decision. Force planners are now attempting to reduce the size of the top five enlisted pay grades of the Marine Corps by restricting their respective populations. This action is a deliberate attempt to shrink the top portion of the enlisted "pyramid" and bring it in line with mandated end-strengths. Specifically, the top five pay grades now account for 32.57% of the enlisted structure. This structure will be reduced to only 31.91% by FY97.<sup>15</sup> The following numbers place this decision into clearer perspective. If the current percentage (32.57%) for the top 5 pay grades was retained, the FY97 population would equate to 46,531 Marines. By reducing the percentage to 31.91%, the population is now projected to be 45,588.<sup>16</sup> This action reflects a real loss of 943 senior Non-Commissioned Officers/Staff Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs/SNCOs), which is over and above the normal drawdown population of these ranks if FY92 percentages were retained in 1997. Obviously, the decision to eliminate this "extra" 1,000 senior enlisted Marines begs to be questioned and unfortunately it appears to be a self-inflicted wound, necessitating our second manpower decision.

During the 1980's the Marine Corps attracted far too many "few good men". Simply put, we reenlisted too many Marines and the resulting ratio of first term to career Marines was adversely skewed. This impact on the enlisted "pyramid" was further

exacerbated as these Marines were promoted and/or completed varying Years of Service (YOS), inflating upper pay grade/YOS populations and thereby forcing new accessions to remain artificially low to meet FY end-strength constraints. Thus, our enlisted force matured too rapidly and did not adequately reflect the needs of the Corps. The Marine Corps is now implementing its second manpower action in the form of a YOS correction which can best be visualized by reviewing the following raw numbers of Figure 1.

**FIGURE 1 -- FY93 YEARS OF SERVICE RECAP**

1 - 10 YOS				11 - 20 YOS			
YOS	FY93 MIX	NOTIONAL	DELTA	YOS	FY93 MIX	NOTIONAL	DELTA
1	28,046	36,088	-8,042	11	4,044	2,988	+1,056
2	22,454	26,324	-3,870	12	3,754	1,937	+1,817
3	23,679	24,490	-811	13	3,217	1,887	+1,330
4	22,623	21,198	+1,425	14	2,953	1,876	+1,077
5	8,788	9,762	-974	15	3,069	1,756	+1,313
6	7,892	8,499	-607	16	2,922	1,652	+1,270
7	5,402	6,962	-1,560	17	2,471	1,348	+1,123
8	4,891	5,193	-302	18	2,394	1,031	+1,363
9	4,987	4,560	+427	19	2,104	954	+1,150
10	4,472	3,391	+1,081	20	2,127	885	+1,242

The above YOS mix is a critical factor in implementing the directed drawdown of the Corps to 142,865 by FY97. As reflected, the current YOS mix of Marines on active duty comprising from one

to ten YOS stands at 133,234. Unfortunately, the FY93 notional (ideal) YOS mix for that same segment of our Corps should be 146,467, reflecting an imbalance (read shortage) of 13,233 Marines. When reviewing our current force of Marines with from eleven to twenty YOS, the problem is magnified. This segment depicts our NCO/SNCO populations, and reflects a severe overage of 12,741 Marines (current YOS is 29,055 vs. notional YOS of 16,314). This then is indeed the problem. This YOS imbalance is why current Marine enlisted end-strength is programmed to experience a decrease of 1,937 Marines between FY92 and FY93 (165,397 to 163,460), yet, accessions for this same period are projected to increase from 31,634 to 36,800, (an increase of 5,166 Marines).<sup>17</sup> Some quick mental math confirms the obvious: if FY93 accessions are up, and end-strength is down, cuts are demanded "somewhere". That "somewhere" appears to be the upper half of the enlisted structure in the form of a reduced senior enlisted population and improved force YOS management. I support the Marine Corps' decision to take these painful actions. We must face the realities of our future austere manpower budgets. By rectifying the "pyramid" imbalance of our current active structure, we will be able to reduce the potential for future accession spikes and better manage our personnel resources. I believe these actions are a necessary first step in the complex task of downsizing our Corps. Now let's look at reserve "beans".

The Marine Corps prides itself in the development of a well



trained, mutually supporting "total force" concept of active and reserve components. Accordingly, any review of Marine recruit training capacities is woefully incomplete without a careful examination of Marine Reserve Force training requirements. Indeed, the Selected Marine Corps Reserve (SMCR) is a major "player" in defining Recruit Depot capacities. During FY92 the SMCR ordered 5,180<sup>18</sup> Nonprior Service (NPS) recruits to our Depots for basic training. These NPS accessions represented over 14% of the Depots total 1992 annual throughput, and with the historically strong congressional support of SMCR end-strength, future SMCR "boat spaces" for recruit training appears to remain stable. In fact, FY93 SMCR NPS accessions have risen to 6,164 and FY94 NPS projections have been established at 6,300<sup>19</sup>. Clearly, SMCR accessions will remain an essential element in planning all future Depot throughput capacities.

Admittedly, this walk through the above "beanfields" was tedious, but I believe it was necessary so that we can better understand and quantify future active and reserve force training requirements for our recruit Depots. The bottom line of this review is unexpected, yet pointedly clear. Future Marine accession projections (active and reserve) will not significantly decrease as a result of the drawdown. Therefore, Marine Corps recruit training requirements (read capacities) must remain at or near their current capabilities. With this argument established, let's put on our "fortuneteller's hat".

In assessing recruit training requirements for the leaner, meaner Marine Corps of the 21st century, it was essential to first understand the actions and rationale of manpower programmers and planners. By tying these detailed requirements to known Depot capabilities, it is obvious that neither Depot is currently taxed annually to train its respective share of the 40,000 recruits for today's or tomorrow's Marine Corps. In fact, our Depots' accessions are cyclic, with peak monthly populations of 2,400 (each) experienced during the summer and reduced monthly throughput of only 1,400 (each) during the winter. This apparent inefficient cycle of feast and famine is the result of our current all volunteer force and its corresponding high school graduation schedules. The Corps recognizes this problem and has implemented "load-leveling" policies to balance monthly training throughput whenever possible. These actions have improved our utilization of recruit training facilities and reduced associated manpower and support costs. Regrettably, the implementation of any stricter forms of load-leveling in the name of "fiscal necessity" is not possible. As long as our manpower pool is limited to qualified "volunteers", we must be responsive to their enlistment preferences and actively compete against their other job opportunities. Forcing recruits to enter boot camp in December won't measurably save money, it will only lose recruits.

However, with this said, I believe that we must not err on

the side of cost savings and ignore our responsibility to maintain a worst case scenario capacity. Surge and mobilization capabilities of the Marine Corps' basic training facilities must be addressed. It is meaningless to tailor our future recruit capacities solely against projected end-strength. Yes, this era of fiscal responsibility demands that we operate our facilities at their optimum peacetime capacities, but this optimum can never supplant wartime requirements. History reflects that the demand for surge capability enabled San Diego alone to train over 223,000 Marines during World War II.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, the Korean War, Vietnam and even Desert Shield/Desert Storm demonstrated that our nation's demand for trained forces can not always be predicted. Consequently, we must plan for contingencies, and this deliberate planning process is where our "fortunetelling" hopefully pays off. Understandably, specific mobilization plans to support contingency planning are classified and can not be addressed in any real detail in this study, however, a general overview of generic requirements reveals that our existing Depots give us the combined capability to surge to a maximum throughput of almost 4,500 (each) recruits monthly. This current 9,000 man monthly capability satisfies existing contingency requirements, and so, any action to permanently alter or reduce this capability must be carefully balanced against the increased risk associated with reduced training capacities. Clearly, the maximum throughput capacities of the Depots in response to a national emergency must be carefully considered in

any decision affecting closure or consolidation.

My "beancounting/fortunetelling" analogy was presented for one purpose; to articulate the dynamic nature of our Corps' recruit training requirements. Decision makers must recognize that downsizing does not immediately translate to reduced accessions. Similarly, less than maximum training throughput can never be equated to wasted capacity without acknowledging the need for surge capabilities. In short, understanding the true requirements demanded of our Depots is fundamental in assessing their real value to our nation and Corps. With this point made, let's take a look at another facet of today's drawdown, the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) study.

#### **BRAC IS A FOUR LETTER WORD**

Not withstanding my "carefully crafted" arguments delineating accession and surge requirements, there still remains an ever-increasing demand by BRAC to justify the luxury of two Depots and their attendant costs. In a cursory analysis, consolidation of the Marine Corps' facilities would appear to provide ample savings in manpower and scarce budget dollars. However, any discussion of "Depot Consolidation" within the Marine Corps evokes myriad emotional arguments defending their existence, each fueled by decades of history, pride, and loyalty, but few real facts. Admittedly, as a 1965 graduate of MCRD San Diego (Platoon

285), and later as a 1977 Series Commander of First Battalion, San Diego, I too am guilty of this emotion. Prior to this study I had little understanding of the complimentary nature of the two Depots; I simply "defended" their continued historic place within our Corps. Through research I am now armed with facts and am confident that each Depot does indeed have unique limitations that thwart consolidation. What follows is my unemotional attempt to support this argument.

MCRD San Diego's location makes it admittedly ripe for BRAC's fire-sale of DoD property. The Depot's 432 acres sits in the middle of one of American's fastest growing cities, comprising a real estate bonanza conservatively valued at \$943 million.<sup>21</sup> San Diego's near perfect year-round weather makes it ideal for training and the recent MILCON investments have indeed transformed the Depot into one of the Corps' most modern, state-of-the-art training facilities. If tasked to consolidate, the Depot's current peacetime maximum throughput (approx 3,000 per month) would enable MCRD San Diego to expand its annual throughput to support all projected 1997 Marine Corps accessions. Additionally, the city of San Diego could easily provide the economic resources necessary for MCRD San Diego to assume this expanded mission. This fact is supported by Figure 2, which recaps a recent MCRD San Diego response to a BRAC Data Call on base capabilities. The figure confirms that even if the Depot's mission were doubled to meet peacetime requirements, (100%

**FIGURE 2. ECONOMIC IMPACT/COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE IMPACT DATA CALL**

2. Community Infrastructure Data. For each element of community infrastructure identified in the two tables below, rate the community's ability to accommodate the relocation of additional functions and personnel to your activity. Please complete each of the three columns listed in the table, reflecting the impact of a 20% increase in personnel working at the activity (and their associated families), a 50% increase in personnel and a 100% increase in personnel. In ranking each category, use one of the following three ratings:

- A - Growth can be accommodated with little or no adverse impact to existing community infrastructure and at little or no additional expense.
- B - Growth can be accommodated, but will require some investment to improve and/or expand existing community infrastructure.
- C - Growth either cannot be accommodated due to physical/environmental limitations or would require substantial investment in community infrastructure improvements.

**ECONOMIC IMPACT / COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE IMPACT  
DATA CALL**

Category	20% Increase	50% Increase	100% Increase
Off-Base Housing	A	A	A
Schools - Public	A	A	A
Schools - Private	A	A	A
Public Transportation - Roadways	A	A	A
Public Transportation - Buses/Subways	A	A	A
Public Transportation - Rail	A	A	A
Fire Protection	A	A	A
Police	A	A	A
Health Care Facilities	A	A	A
Utilities:	A	A	A
Water Supply	A	A	A
Water Distribution	A	A	A
Energy Supply	A	A	A
Energy Distribution	A	A	A
Wastewater Collection	A	A	A
Wastewater Treatment	A	A	A
Storm Water Collection	A	A	A
Solid Waste Collection and Disposal	A	A	A
Hazardous/Toxic Waste Disposal	A	A	A
Recreational Activities	A	A	A

NOTE: Number of personnel upon which percentages were based is approximately 8,000 and includes 3,000 recruits.

increase), the local community could effectively support all demands for additional rental housing, schools, social services, transportation, etc.<sup>22</sup> Obviously, the Depot would then be working at very near its maximum throughput and therefore could not adequately respond to any substantial, protracted surge or mobilization demands. This risk would have to be weighed in relationship to the anticipated savings achieved by consolidation.

Unfortunately, San Diego's impressive facilities, both on and off base, can not mask the obvious military limitations of this valuable commercial location. The Depot is surrounded and simply can not grow to meet unknown national threats of the twenty-first century. Because of this critical limitation, I do not believe that our leadership could justify consolidating all Marine recruit training at a location that has no capability for future expansion; especially one that is already busing 22,000 recruits annually to Camp Pendleton for weapons familiarization and qualification. This fact makes San Diego a very difficult sell when defending it against BRAC's demand for fiscal responsibility.

MCRD Parris Island does not currently have the base facilities or unencumbered access to sufficient land to develop required ranges and maneuver areas necessary for an expanded recruit training consolidation mission.<sup>23</sup> Specifically, the

physical characteristics of the island (only 40% of the Depot's 8,000 acres are dry land) make it impossible to build another rifle range to support an expanded marksmanship training mission. This fact has two immediate adverse impacts on a consolidated mission. First, existing marksmanship facilities would be severely taxed to respond to current peacetime requirements. Yes, current Parris Island ranges could handle a 100% increase in usage, but undoubtedly at the cost maintaining high marksmanship standards (i.e. extended length of firing days, Saturday/Sunday firing for "unqualified" recruits, adverse weather delays, etc.). Second, (and most important), the Depot's ranges could not support the marksmanship training requirements of consolidated peacetime accessions and a simultaneous surge/mobilization demand. This limitation would be a critical "war-stopper" in time of a national emergency.

Additionally, as reflected in Figure 3, the city of Beaufort, South Carolina lacks the manpower pool and industrial base necessary to support a significant expansion effort at Parris Island, if directed. Specific limitations include limited transportation capacities, public schools, dependent housing, social support agencies, professional resources, etc.<sup>24</sup> Further, Parris Island's geographic location makes it less desirable as the Marine Corps' sole recruit training facility. Travel costs for the thousands of recruits from the Western Recruiting Region would be exorbitant. This is best illustrated



by noting that over 12% of the Corps' annual accessions are recruited from the state of California (i.e. California enlisted 3,688 recruits in FY92)<sup>25</sup>. Total cost to annually transport all Western Region recruits is estimated to exceed \$5.7 million.<sup>26</sup> Further, the inclement weather of the nation's southeastern coast (i.e. extremely hot summers and significant rainfall) can substantially increase lost training days. Finally, the Depot's proximity to the Atlantic coast makes it very susceptible to severe ocean storms similar to the Hurricane of 1940 which closed the Depot for over a month and 1989's Hurricane Hugo which effectively closed Parris Island for several days. MCRD Parris Island does provide the Corps with an effective complement to San Diego; however, its noted limitations make it questionable as the Marine Corps' only recruit training facility.

**FIGURE 3. ECONOMIC IMPACT/COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE IMPACT DATA CALL**

2. Community Infrastructure Data. For each element of community infrastructure identified in the two tables below, rate the community's ability to accommodate the relocation of additional functions and personnel to your activity. Please complete each of the three columns listed in the table, reflecting the impact of a 20% increase in personnel working at the activity (and their associated families), a 50% increase in personnel and a 100% increase in personnel. In ranking each category, use one of the following three ratings:

- A - Growth can be accommodated with little or no adverse impact to existing community infrastructure and at little or no additional expense.
- B - Growth can be accommodated, but will require some investment to improve and/or expand existing community infrastructure.
- C - Growth either cannot be accommodated due to physical/environmental limitations or would require substantial investment in community infrastructure improvements.

Category	20% Increase	50% Increase	100% Increase
Off-Base Housing	A	B	B
Schools - Public	A	B	C Note 1
Schools - Private	A	B	C Note 2
Public Transportation - Roadways	A	A	A
Public Transportation - Buses/Subways	A	A	A
Public Transportation - Rail	A	A	A
Fire Protection	A	B	B
Police	A	B	B
Health Care Facilities	A	B	C Note 3
Utilities:			
Water Supply	A	A	A
Water Distribution	A	A	A
Energy Supply	A	A	B
Energy Distribution	A	A	B
Wastewater Collection	A	A	B
Wastewater Treatment	A	B	B
Storm Water Collection	A	A	B
Solid Waste Collection and Disposal	A	A	A
Hazardous/Toxic Waste Disposal	A	A	A
Recreational Activities	A	B	C Note 4

Note 1: Requires acquisition of land and construction of additional schools.

Note 2: Requires additional classroom space.

Note 3: Requires expansion of current staffing and facilities.

Note 4: Requires substantial investment by local community to develop additional facilities such as pools, ball fields, recreational areas and youth programs.

## READ MY LIPS -- CONSOLIDATE!

Regardless of my stated arguments on the limitations of either Depot accepting a consolidated recruit training mission, the possibility that this decision will be made forces us (the Marine Corps) to be proactive. The reality of yet another round of DoD budget cuts (\$10 billion announced) makes BRAC's current study appear to be a "fait accompli" for some Marine Corps installations. Consequently, recognizing San Diego's commercial value and expansion limitations, MCRD Parris Island appears to me to be the most likely Depot to execute the consolidation mission. Let's look at what would be required for Parris Island to successfully accomplish this mission.

As previously discussed, Parris Island's history confirms its capability to surge throughput in response to national mobilization demands (e.g. 46,000 for WWI; 204,000 recruits in WWII; 138,000 during Korea; and over 200,000 for Vietnam)<sup>27</sup>. However, this capability is of a limited duration. The expeditionary nature of the billeting, messing, and classroom facilities in support of mobilization can not be sustained for an extended period without a corresponding deterioration in many functional areas.<sup>28</sup> Accordingly, to assume the Corps' total recruit training mission, an extensive expansion of existing facilities would be required, to include: A new (5th) Battalion

Headquarters and dining facility; 96 male squad bays, 100 BEQ rooms, 40 BOQ rooms, 565 enlisted housing units, and 110 officer housing units. Additional support facilities would include: an additional indoor pool, classroom and Marine Exchange space, expanded medical and dental facilities, expansion of existing Drill Instructor School, and the construction of a new Recruiters' School.<sup>29</sup> These new MILCON projects are estimated to cost \$222,906,000 in FY93 dollars and would take approximately 24 months to complete once approved.<sup>30</sup> This is serious money when compared to past Marine Corps MILCON budgets (e.g. \$144 million worldwide in 1991).<sup>31</sup> Obviously, the diversion of MILCON funds to meet this new expansion would doubtlessly be at the expense of other needed, programmed Marine Corps construction projects.

The good news is personnel! Manpower requirements for this expanded mission are projected to be an additional 1,269 personnel (89 Marine officers, 832 Marine enlisted, 66 Navy Officers, 126 Navy enlisted, and 156 civilians). Of course, if MCRD San Diego is disestablished, this new personnel structure would presumably be available, and consolidation would still provide a potential savings of 864 personnel. Further, assuming that the follow-on Marine Combat Training currently conducted on both coasts were also consolidated on the east coast, an additional savings of 540 structure spaces could be achieved.<sup>32</sup>

Consolidation can provide substantial personnel savings, and this factor can not be summarily dismissed when faced with mandated drawdowns that are forcing the deactivation of numerous Fleet Marine Force units.

The above projections of Parris Islands's required facilities and personnel are tied to several implicit assumptions. First, that the land to expand the Depot to meet the new mission will be available and approved by the Environmental Protective Agency. This could be a "war-stopper" because much of the undeveloped land comprising the Depot is currently designated as "jurisdictional wetlands" (approx. 1,126 acres), and is the habitat for 3 species of wildlife that are either rare, endangered or threatened.<sup>33</sup> Approval to utilize and develop this land may be a difficult obstacle to overcome. Secondly, we can not dismiss the impact this expansion will cause to the surrounding communities. As previously stated, the Beaufort area has severe limitations of off-base housing. A FY91 market analysis showed a deficit of 629 houses for the Beaufort area,<sup>34</sup> and a November 1992 statistic revealed that only 14 rental units, (1.6% of the total local market), were vacant.<sup>35</sup> At the risk of being redundant, these critical shortfalls must be addressed and satisfied long before base expansion could be successfully implemented. Finally, let's examine what this consolidation will provide our Corps. The new expanded depot is projected to have a maximum capacity of 46,800 recruits annually.<sup>36</sup> This throughput

will more than meet peacetime accession requirements, however, it only provides a capability to train an additional 9,000 recruits to meet surge and/or mobilization demands. This is far short of the numbers required to respond to current contingency/mobilization plans and is only 51% of the Corps' current surge capability!

The issue of Depot consolidation can not be adequately addressed without a brief inquiry into yet another possible option, the construction of a new recruit training depot. Admittedly, an indepth study of this course of action has not been conducted, but several obvious conclusions can be drawn. First, the previously cited limitations of both San Diego and Parris Island to assume the consolidated mission may warrant construction of a new installation. This new facility could be designed to respond to 21st century peacetime accession demands, while also providing necessary flexibility (capacity) to respond to future national threats. Additionally, it could be developed as a replacement for one of our two current Depots (read San Diego) and/or as a replacement for both. The facility's location would be dependent on its intended mission, but undoubtedly it could be established in a location that would best support existing FMF commands (i.e. Camp Pendleton or Camp Lejeune). Finally, although the cost of this new facility would be high, it immediately becomes fiscally more attractive if its cost were offset by the sale of BRAC properties (read MCRD San Diego).

In sum, the Corps currently possesses two functional Depots which jointly meet peacetime accession demands and can, in response to any crisis, expand capacity to meet surge requirements. If directed, either Depot could temporarily expand its capacity to independently support projected peacetime requirements; however, neither Depot can separately respond to a consolidated worst case scenario mission. After acknowledging these facts, if one of the Depots is still directed to be closed (read MCRD San Diego), and the recruit training mission is consolidated at a single facility, then our peacetime capacity can be achieved at the cost of approximately one quarter of a billion dollars. This great expense would be offset by some personnel savings and a portion of the Operations and Maintenance budget of the disestablished Depot, but consolidation will still not provide sufficient throughput capacity to support full or total mobilization requirements in response to any national crisis. That's the rub!

#### **SOLUTION = STATUS QUO**

The Marine Corps' catch 22 is painfully obvious. The loss of a credible threat to our national sovereignty has spawned heretofore unthinkable second and third order effects. Specifically, a smaller defense budget begets a smaller Marine Corps. A smaller Corps begets BRAC scrutiny. BRAC scrutiny begets depot consolidation studies. Consolidation studies begets

surge capability arguments. Surge capability begets a credible threat. The loss of a credible threat is where this vicious circle began! Our "victory" in the cold war is now forcing us to defend the continued existence of the very tools (read bases/stations) that contributed to our success. This dilemma, when focused on Marine Recruit Training installations, has only three possible solutions: construction, consolidation, or status quo.

"Construction" is one possible course of action in response to the demand for fiscal responsibility. Recounting the limitations of MCRD San Diego and Parris Island, an effective argument could be made for the construction of a new Depot possessing expanded capabilities for the 21st century. This new facility could overcome the previously delineated wartime shortcomings of our current installations and could replace either and/or both Depots. As a replacement for San Diego, it could be established at Camp Pendleton at an estimated cost of several billion dollars.<sup>37</sup> But alas, this dream is indeed suspect when competing for shrinking defense dollars. Would the Navy give up a new aircraft carrier or the Air Force a B-2 to fund this new training facility? I think not!

"Consolidation" is the solution of choice by "green eye-shade types" who see closing a Depot as a quick panacea for mounting fiscal pressures. However, as I have laboriously tried to



demonstrate, this solution comes at great cost. If we consciously reduce surge capabilities, we are proportionally increasing national risk. Further, this risk is increased exponentially when the consolidation is directed at a location (Parris Island) that is susceptible to adverse, unpredictable weather that can severely interrupt/halt training. Finally, does it really make fiscal sense to close an efficient, modern training facility, only to spend a quarter of a billion dollars to replicate a capability we currently possess? I think not!

I believe that the Marine Corps' only viable solution is to maintain the status quo. I do not accept the proffered BRAC assertion that two Depots, performing like missions at reduced capacities, is inefficient. My study has clearly demonstrated the need for their continued existence. Mobilization training capacities are an essential element of our Corps' inherent value to our nation. I believe that any action to measurably diminish this capacity brings with it unacceptable risk that can never be supported.

Our Commandant recently stated that "the greatest contribution our Corps has made to this nation, or will ever make, is not that we win wars, but that we make Marines."<sup>38</sup> In echoing General Mundy's sentiment, I caution all decision makers to be extremely careful when toying with our ability to "make these Marines". The current system ain't broke, so don't fix it!

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Department of the Navy, RECRUIT TRAINING, MARINE CORPS ORDER 1510.32B (Washington: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 25 March 1991), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Commanding General, MCRD, San Diego Study, "Base Realignment And Closure 1991 (BRAC)" (San Diego, California, undated), p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, A Brief History of The Marine Corps Base and Recruit Depot San Diego, California (Washington: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, 1960), p. 8.

<sup>4</sup>CG, MCRD San Diego Study, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup>Assistant Chief of Staff, Staff Judge Advocate, MCRD, San Diego, California, "UPDATE OF MCRD FACTS", memorandum 11011/9, 22 January 1991, enclosure (1), p. 1.

<sup>6</sup>MCRD San Diego Study Group, "Report of MCRD, San Diego Relocation Study, Conducted 18 - 20 November 1988" (San Diego, California, 1988), p. 4.

<sup>7</sup>AC/S, SJA, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup>Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, MCRD, San Diego, "Surge Capacity" letter 1510/G-3, San Diego, California, 13 October 1992, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup>MCRD San Diego, ANNUAL SHIPPING PLAN (FISCAL YEAR 1993), REGIMENTAL BULLETIN 1513/3 (San Diego: Recruit Training Regiment, 1 October 1992), p. 2.

<sup>10</sup>Commanding General, MCRD, Parris Island, "Data Call Number Three Alpha" letter 11011/G-4, Parris Island, South Carolina, 30 November 1992, enclosure (1), section VI, p. 4.

<sup>11</sup>Major C. G. PIERRE, USMC, G-1 Manpower, MCRD Parris Island, South Carolina, telephonic interview by author, 9 February 1993.

<sup>12</sup>Major J. P. Rickman, USMC, MP Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, interview by author, 14 December 1992, Washington D.C.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Major J. P. Rickman, USMC, MP Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, telephonic interview by author, 28 January 1993.

<sup>18</sup>Captain J. Randall, USMC, RAP-31, Headquarters Marine Corps, interview by author, 14 January 1993, Washington D.C.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>MCRD San Diego Study Group, p. 3.

<sup>21</sup>AC/S, SJA, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup>Commanding General, MCRD San Diego, "MISSION SUITABILITY FOR MARINE CORPS INSTALLATIONS" letter 11101/4, San Diego, California, 28 October 1992, p. 4-5.

<sup>23</sup>Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, MCRD, Parris Island, "UPDATE OF PARRIS ISLAND'S RECRUIT TRAINING EXPANSION CAPABILITIES AND REQUIREMENTS" letter 1000/G-3, Parris Island, South Carolina, 10 February 1993, Tab A, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup>Commanding General, MCRD Parris Island, "COMMUNITY/ECONOMIC IMPACT FOR MARINE CORPS INSTALLATIONS (DATA CALL 38)" letter 11011/G-4, Parris Island, South Carolina, 27 October 1992, enclosure (1), p. 8.

<sup>25</sup>Commanding General, MCRD San Diego, "SECNAV BASE STRUCTURE EVALUATION COMMITTEE DATA CALL FOR TRAINING CENTERS AND SCHOOLS" letter 11101/4, San Diego, California, 3 September 1992, enclosure (1), p. 4.

<sup>26</sup>CG, MCRD San Diego Study, p. 5.

<sup>27</sup>Dr. Robert Wise, Historian, MCRD, Parris Island, South Carolina, telephonic interview by author, 9 February 1993.

<sup>28</sup>AC/S G-3, MCRD Parris Island, Tab B, p. 1.

<sup>29</sup>AC/S G-3, MCRD Parris Island, Tab A, p. 3.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>AC/S, SJA, p. 4.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid, Tab A, p. 4.

<sup>33</sup>CG, MCRD, Parris Island, 30 November 1992, enclosure (1), p. 4 & 6.

<sup>34</sup>Commanding General, MCRD, Parris Island,  
"SECRETARY OF THE NAVY (SECNAV) BASE STRUCTURE EVALUATION  
COMMITTEE DATA CALL FOR TRAINING CENTERS AND SCHOOLS" letter  
11011/G-4, Parris Island, South Carolina, 10 September 1992, p.  
11.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid, enclosure (1), p. 9.

<sup>36</sup>AC/S G-3, MCRD, Parris Island, Tab A, p. 2.

<sup>37</sup>AC/S, SJA, p. 3.

<sup>38</sup>Commandant of the Marine Corps, HOMOSEXUALS IN  
THE ARMED FORCES, ALMAR 38/93 (Washington: Headquarters Marine  
Corps, 29 January 1993), p. 1.

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